



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340-4394  
Town Clerk (860)441-6640  
Town Manager  
(860)441-6630

## Meeting Minutes

### Representative Town Meeting

**Moderator Natalie B. Billing, Representatives Joe Baril, Tom Barnhart, Lori Bartinik, Alicia Bauer, Genevieve Cerf, Michael Collins, Syma Ebbin, June Evered, Peter Fairbank, Robert Garcia, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Keith Hedrick, Debra Jenkins, James Loughlin, Carole McCarthy, Kevin McMahon, Richard Metayer, David Miner, Deborah Monteiro, Betsy Moukawsher, James Moulding, Scott Newsome, Nora Patterson, Deborah Peruzzotti, Robert Post, Kevin Power, Don Pratt, Mary-Ellen Schefers, Eleanor Scussel, Jack Sebastian, Jennifer Smuts, Eleanor Steere, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Patti Thunberg, Cheryl Tilney, Kevin Trejo, and Tom Vivirito.**

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**Wednesday, October 10, 2007**

**7:30 PM**

**Senior Center**

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#### Regular Meeting

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#### A. ROLL CALL

*Moderator Natalie Billing called the meeting to order at 7:37p.m.*

*28 members were present, and a quorum was declared.*

*The Moderator reported that Reps. Scussel and Svencer called to say they are unable to attend this meeting.*

*Members Present: Moderator Billing, Rep. Bartinik, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Collins, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Miner, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Moulding, Rep. Moukawsher, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Thunberg, Rep. Tilney, Rep. Trejo and Rep. Vivirito*

*Members Absent: Rep. Baril, Rep. Barnhart, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Jenkins, Rep. McMahon, Rep. Metayer, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Post, Rep. Schefers, Rep. Scussel, Rep. Steere, Rep. Steinfeld and Rep. Svencer*

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Public Works Director Gary Schneider, Project Manager of School Construction Rick Norris, Superintendent of Schools Dr. James Mitchell, Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds for Education Wes Greenleaf, Deputy Town Clerk Janet Downs, and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.*

#### B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

*The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag led by Rep. Miner.*

#### C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2007

*A motion that the minutes be adopted was made by Rep. Trejo, seconded by Rep. Smuts.*

*Rep. Trejo stated he abstained on the vote for approval of minutes at the September meeting.*

*Moderator Billing requested that the Manager's response to Rep. Ebbin on page 2 be amended to indicate that discussions regarding the possibility of litigation are ongoing.*

*The vote on the minutes as corrected carried 27 in favor 1 abstention (Abstaining: Rep. Monteiro).*

#### D. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

#### E. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

*Moderator Billing announced that the Groton Heights School Reuse Task Force needs a representative from the RTM.*

*Rep. Moukawsher volunteered to serve on this committee.*

#### F. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER:

##### 1. Financial report

*Mr. Vincent reported that the Unreserved & Undesignated Fund balance as of July 1, 2007 is*

approximately \$9.6 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000 and no funds have been transferred; the Capital Reserve balance is approximately \$2.5 million which is substantially higher than last month's report. He mentioned that this is due to the fact that fund balances from completed capital projects are being closed. He noted that the Finance Department needs to clarify and finalize the figures before a report is released in writing. He apologized that the Town Manager's Newsletter was not distributed this evening and that his report was done orally. Mr. Vincent mentioned that he had confirmed that the Town of Stonington's funding for the Mystic and Noank Library had fallen \$25,000 short of the request prior to sending of the letter that was approved at last month's meeting.

In response to Rep. Granatosky, the Town Manager reiterated that he wanted to confirm the figures from capital projects that are being closed out before releasing a written report of the increase to the current capital reserve fund.

## **2. Monthly briefing**

The Town Manager reviewed the bond rating reports that were distributed to members at this meeting.

In response to Rep. Sebastian, the Manager confirmed that the attachment concerning the update on the Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) Upgrade is the same as last month and that it was a mistake. The Town Manager addressed Rep. Sebastian's concerns about the completion of the Fitch High School construction project. He stated that it is his intention not to seek additional funding. He noted that all staff is working hard to achieve the goal of completing the project on time and within budget.

## **G. LIAISON REPORTS**

### **1. Town Council - Rep. Monteiro**

Rep. Monteiro reported on the meetings of the Council and Committee of the Whole held September 18, October 2 and 9, 2007. Highlights of these meetings were: establishing the Groton Heights School Reuse Task Force, tabling the matter of Property Tax Relief, approving the bond sale on October 24, 2007, and establishing a Thames Street/Bridge Street Advisory Committee.

### **2. Economic Development Commission - Rep. Cerf**

No report.

### **3. Town Council/Board of Education/RTM Liaison Committee - Rep. Patterson**

No report.

### **4. Permanent School Building Committee - Rep. Miner**

No report.

### **5. School Design Committee Phase II - Reps. Smuts & Harrell**

Rep. Smuts reported on the meetings held on September 13 and September 27, 2007. The committee toured Fitch Middle School and continued discussion on middle school alternatives. She stated that the committee has started to identify which schools have the greatest needs. The committee discussed the possibility of obtaining the services of a consultant that could provide specific information on the identified needs.

### **6. Shellfish Task Force - Rep. Ebbin**

Rep. Ebbin provided a detailed summary of discussions at the September 17, 2007 meeting. She noted that the replacement of Fort Hill Homes sewer pipe laterals is on schedule and that the relining of the sewer mains will begin in May 2008. It was suggested that the vegetative border along the Poquonnock River by the Town Social Services building be increased. She commented that it was proposed that the Town Manager allocate \$45,000 in next year's budget to begin the remediation of the ponds on Town land near the Kolnaski School. A letter from the Shellfish Commission supporting this project will be sent to the Town Manager.

### **7. Flanders Road Utility Extension Committee - Rep. Bauer**

No report.

**H. COMMITTEE REPORTS****1. FINANCE****a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Granatosky**

*No meeting, no report.*

**2. COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT****a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Vivirito**

*No meeting, no report.*

**3. EDUCATION****a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Patterson**

*No meeting, no report.*

**4. HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES****a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town**

*No meeting, no report.*

**5. RECREATION****a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town- Chairman Power**

*No meeting, no report.*

**6. PUBLIC SAFETY****a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Pratt**

*No meeting, no report.*

**7. PUBLIC WORKS****a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town - Chairman Collins**

*Rep. Collins read the minutes of the meeting held on October 3, 2007. (Minutes are attached.)*

*A motion to accept the minutes was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Garcia and so voted unanimously.*

**2007-0218 Additional Appropriation for Catherine Kolnaski School****RESOLUTION APPROVING ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE CATHERINE KOLNASKI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton approved Ordinance No. 258 at referendum on April 27, 2004, which appropriated \$26,100,000 and authorized borrowing in the same amount for construction of a new elementary school on a parcel of Town owned land known as the King property, and

WHEREAS, construction activity on the project began in August 2006, and

WHEREAS, Town and Board of Education staff and the Permanent School Building Committee have monitored the progress of the project in an effort to identify cost savings, and

WHEREAS, a number of unexpected and unbudgeted costs have impacted the project, including modification of window specifications and other related costs, the need to reconfigure space into a classroom, the need to install a fire pump, and the desire to increase the original budgeted amount for technology, which would require an additional \$492,058 to be added to the project budget, and

WHEREAS, the Permanent School Building Committee at its September 6, 2007 meeting unanimously endorsed a \$500,000 increase in funding for the Catherine Kolnaski School project, and

WHEREAS, as of July 31, 2007 there is an unreserved, undesignated fund balance in the Capital

Reserve Fund (#501) of \$1,505,176, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council desires to use \$500,000 of that amount to fund expenditures within the Catherine Kolnaski Elementary School construction project, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council appropriates \$500,000 to a FYE 2008 Capital Improvement Project (#50107) for that intended purpose.

**A motion was made by Rep. Collins, seconded by Rep. Garcia, that this matter be Adopted.**

*In response to Rep. Sebastian, the Town Manager provided information on the items for which the additional appropriation will be used. He noted that discussions are ongoing for a settlement concerning the Kolnaski School windows, and that progress has been made. He encouraged the members to consider this request based on having the two elementary schools be comparable, and to include all the items that were originally planned. He noted that if this resolution were to fail, some items would have to be eliminated such as the purchase of furniture (which has already been reduced), playscapes, technology, moving coordination assistance and commissioning of the building. He mentioned that this additional appropriation represents only one-half of one percent of the 92 million dollar school construction projects. He stated that he cannot predict if any contingency will be remaining at the completion of the projects. The Manager stated he cannot address contributions from the Board of Education (BOE) budget. He apologized for not having a written Town Manager's Newsletter with confirmed financial figures for the Capital Reserve Fund. He mentioned that an estimated \$400,000 from BOE capital projects dating as far back as 2003, as well as an estimated \$400,000 from completed Town projects may be returned to the Town's Capital Fund Balance once they have been closed out. He stated that these are projected figures and have not been confirmed.*

*Dr. Mitchell stated that the BOE has no plan to cover the additional expenses.*

*Rep. Thunberg stated that she will not support the additional appropriation. She feels that she must represent her constituents who have voiced concerns about how the money is being spent, the impact of revaluation, and the referendum in November authorizing more money for two major projects. She explained that concerns have been raised about the prioritizing and timing of all of these projects at one time.*

*Rep. Trejo feels it would be punishing 450 children in his district not to support this resolution. He stated that Districts 2 and 3 want this project to be completed.*

*Rep. Miner mentioned that the school building projects and renovations have been discussed, reviewed and delayed since 1990. He feels that the projects should move forward.*

*Rep. Moulding questioned re-routing the water supply lines. He stated that he understands construction cost overruns and the use of contingencies. He hopes that the Town has learned from mistakes made on these projects. He suggested that in the future there be a formal process that includes taxpayers and management working toward a joint resolution to resolve this type of monetary issue. He suggested that any contribution from the BOE budget would be a goodwill gesture and go a long way in the eyes of the taxpayers.*

*Mr. Norris explained the reasons and cost savings for the re-routing of the water supply route.*

*Rep. Ebbin expressed her opinion that better planning, improved oversight and trimming of costs should be utilized in the future to fix problems. She does not agree that authorizing additional money is the correct way to fix mistakes. She will vote to support this resolution but will not support similar appropriations in the future.*

*Rep. Sebastian stated that due to information provided during the discussion, he will support the resolution.*

*Moderator Billing mentioned that about 10 years ago the practice of using professional estimators for projects was begun, and that the process has been successful in maintaining projects under budget.*

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Votes:** In Favor: 27 - Moderator Billing, Rep. Bartnik, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Collins, Rep. Ebbin, Rep. Evered, Rep. Fairbank, Rep. Garcia, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. McCarthy, Rep. Miner, Rep. Monteiro, Rep. Moulding, Rep. Moukawsher, Rep. Patterson, Rep. Peruzzotti, Rep. Power, Rep. Pratt, Rep. Sebastian, Rep. Smuts, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Tilney, Rep. Trejo and Rep. Vivirito  
Opposed: 1 - Rep. Thunberg

## **8. RULES & PROCEDURES**

### **a. Chairman's notes on the business of the Town**

*No meeting, no report.*

## **I. OTHER BUSINESS**

## **J. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. was made by Rep. Harrell, seconded by Rep. Fairbank and so voted unanimously.*

*Attest:*

*Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk  
Clerk of the RTM*

*Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk*